



Force Investigation Team

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1999 Annual Report

Police departments everywhere have no greater responsibility than to ensure that our officers, who are entrusted by the public to use force in the performance of their duties, use that force prudently and appropriately. And when deadly force is used, police departments have a solemn obligation--to the public and to the officers involved--to investigate these cases thoroughly, accurately and expeditiously. - Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey

The Creation of The Force Investigation Team

The Metropolitan Police Department is committed to enhancing the city's quality of life by providing the highest level of police service. As the primary law enforcement agency in the nation's capital, our members have taken seriously the responsibility to provide police service to our community. Accordingly, it is the mission of the Metropolitan Police Department to prevent crime and the fear of crime, as we work with others to build safe and healthy communities throughout the District of Columbia. To achieve our mission, one of the awesome responsibilities that our members are entrusted with is the authority to use force, including deadly force.

In the past, the Metropolitan Police Department had not met community expectations nor police industry standards as it related to use-of-service firearms and subsequent use-of-service firearm investigations. In November 1998, the Washington Post published a series of articles concerning the Metropolitan Police Department and its poor handling of police-involved shooting incidents. The series, entitled *Deadly Force*, won a Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in April 1999. The articles revealed that Metropolitan Police officers shot more people per capita than any police officers in the nation. In addition, the series highlighted problems plaguing the Metropolitan Police Department's police shooting processes. Specifically, it was reported that the department's force-related training, supervision, and police shooting investigations were inadequate and disorganized. Also, it was learned that the police department lacked a central repository for police-involved shooting information.

Accordingly, Chief of Police Charles H. Ramsey instituted a number of reforms to address major aspects of the department's use-of-force practices and procedures. His reforms included the implementation of new force-related policies, a complete overhaul of force-related training, and the establishment of an investigative team to monitor and scrutinize the use of deadly force.

One of the primary objectives of this investigative team was to provide the Metropolitan Police Department with a standard, comprehensive, neutral investigative response to use of deadly force incidents. Additional objectives included developing and maintaining internal reporting and investigative mechanisms to ensure quality control and accountability. These mechanisms had to clearly chronicle the circumstances and document the volumes of information inherent in deadly force investigations. This is how the Force Investigation Team came into existence. The establishment of this team was only one aspect of the Metropolitan Police Department's continuing use-of-force reformation. It has helped fulfill the department's solemn obligation to its officers, as well as the public, to investigate use-of-force incidents thoroughly, accurately and expeditiously.

The Force Investigation Team itself was tasked to research, plan, and implement operational procedures. The creative and unique aspect of this initiative was that the Force Investigation Team utilized modern business theories to improve the quality of police shooting investigations. The team established a system that ensures high quality, comprehensive, and professional police-involved shooting investigations.

Vision, Mission and Structure

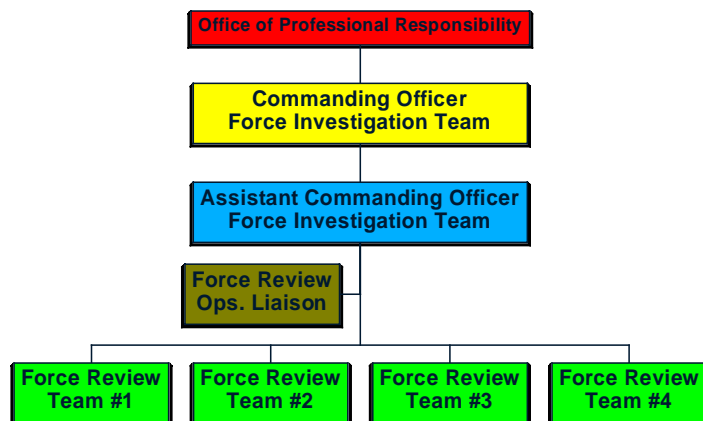
The Force Investigation Team leader facilitated brainstorming sessions where team members shared ideas on how to improve police shooting investigations. Through these sessions, and parameters established by the Chief of Police, the team developed the unit's *Vision/Value Statement* and the unit's *Team Mission Statement*. From this point on, all team efforts were focused on meeting these goals.

It is the mission of the Metropolitan Police Department's Office of Professional Responsibility Force Investigation Team to conduct fair, impartial, and professional reviews of use-of-firearm discharges of departmentally issued or authorized firearms at persons, and to investigate enumerated non-deadly force incidents involving sworn Metropolitan Police officers.

The Metropolitan Police Department Office of Professional Responsibility Force Investigation Team is comprised of eleven sworn police officers. It consists of four two-member investigative response teams (called Force Review Teams), and one two-member management-level response team. These teams are available for on-duty or call-back response for enumerated incidents on a 24-hour basis. Additionally, a Force Review Operations Liaison provides operations support, which includes liaison duties with the MPD Office of the General Counsel, the D.C. Office of the Corporation Counsel, as well as informational requests from federal agencies and other organizations.



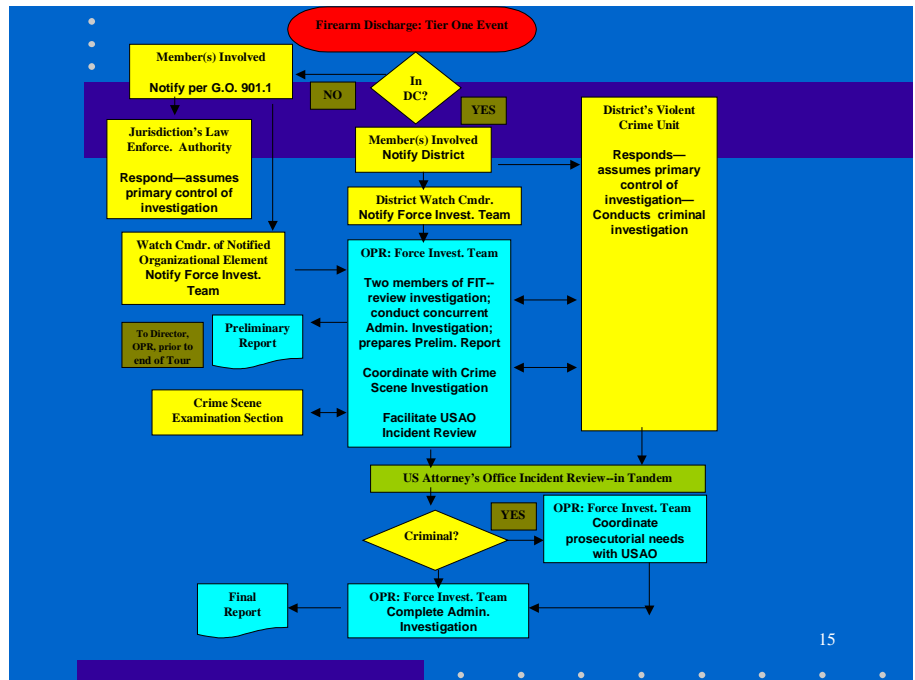
Force Investigation Organizational Plan



Investigations

Focusing on quality improvement guru W. Edwards Deming's appreciation for systems, the Force Investigation Team created a two-tiered process for investigating police shootings. The system was recorded in an organizational plan that included; mission, statement of problem, policies, structure, operations, stakeholder outreach, administrative, and training components. Flowcharts were developed to visually demonstrate the new system, and a matrix was prepared to clarify responsibilities. Team members created worksheets and designed investigative report templates that ensured consistent and comprehensive final investigations. In addition, the Team created an organized central repository to track and analyze police-shooting data.

The development of flowcharts visually document the process of completing a comprehensive police-involved shooting investigation. Written operational plans carefully explain investigative processes. The written and visual aspects blend to make the processes easier to understand. Along with the responsibility matrix, these items combine to exhibit the system that ensures consistent high-quality investigations.



Additionally, the Force Investigation Team has designed investigative templates. These templates permit investigators to complete comprehensive and consistent investigations in a uniform format. Furthermore, the Force Investigation Team has created on-scene worksheets and developed witness questions that ensure all pertinent issues are addressed. The Force Investigation Team's planning and organization helped prepare its members for the challenges they were about to face.

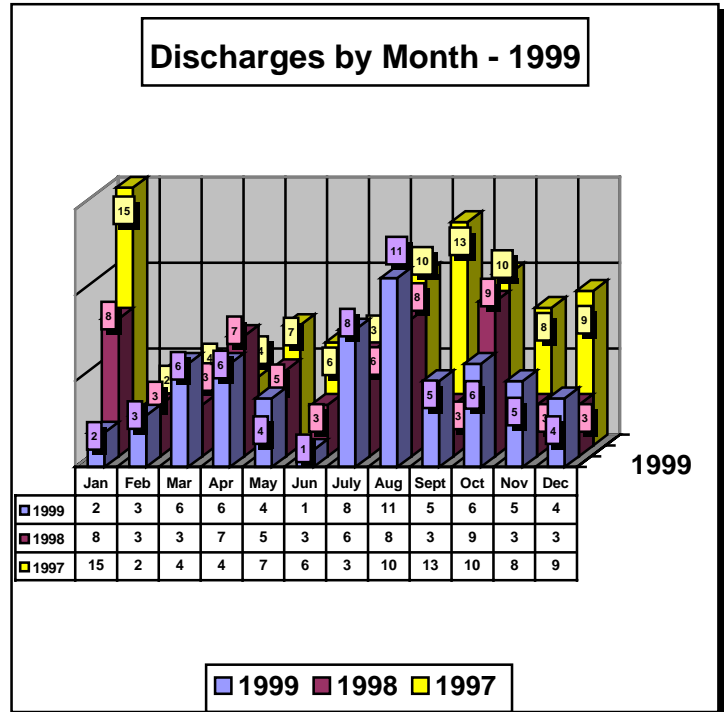
The Force Investigation Team became operational on April 4, 1999. From April 4, 1999, through December 31, 1999, the Force Investigation Team responded to the scene of 32 police discharges. During this period, members of the Force Investigation Team completed 29 Preliminary Investigative reports, 12 Final Investigative reports, 26 Service Weapon Review Board case examinations, and 10 F.B.I. Civil Rights Liaison cases (*Note: FIT Unit members responded to 3 scenes to observe prior to becoming fully operational).

Moreover, during the 9 month period in 1999 when they were operational, members of the Force Investigation Team logged over 1,100 response hours, participated in 192 interviews, and worked over 1,700 follow-up hours. In addition, members of the Force Investigation Team became the department's central repository for police-involved firearm incidents, and conducted statistical analysis of the data.

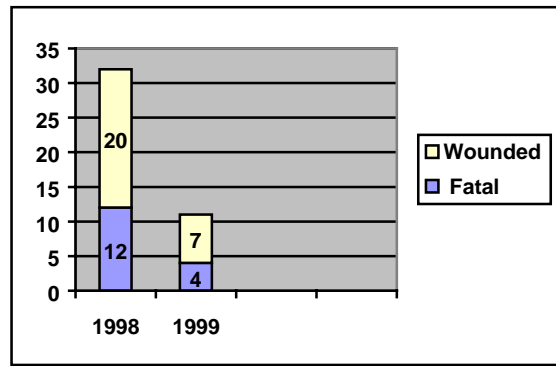
Statistical Review and Analysis

The Force Investigation Team serves as the central repository for all Metropolitan Police Department officer-involved firearm discharges. The statistical analysis of the data has helped the department's management to identify improvement opportunities for related training, policies, equipment, operations, and procedures.

In 1999, there were a total 62 firearm discharges by Metropolitan Police officers. This figure includes discharges at animals, accidental discharges, and discharges at persons. Reflecting trends from previous years, discharges occurred more often during the months of July and August.

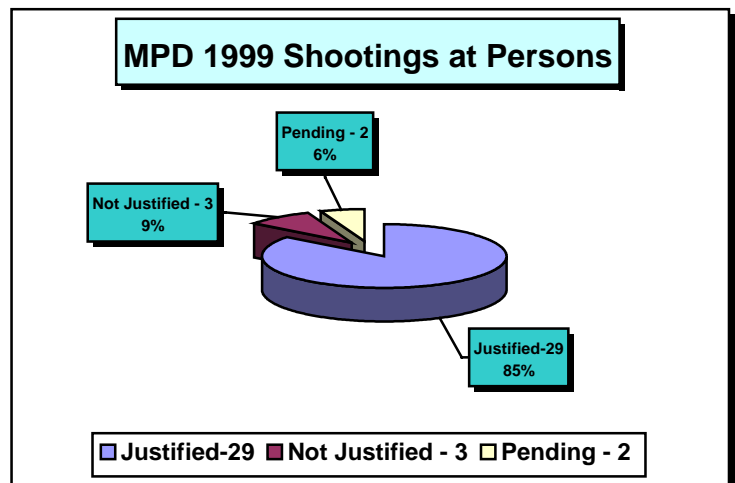


Metropolitan Police Department officers shot far fewer people in 1999 than they did in 1998. In 1999, officers shot a total of 11 people; 4 were killed and 7 were injured. In 1998, officers shot a total of 32 people; 12 were killed, 20 were injured. This represents a 66% reduction.

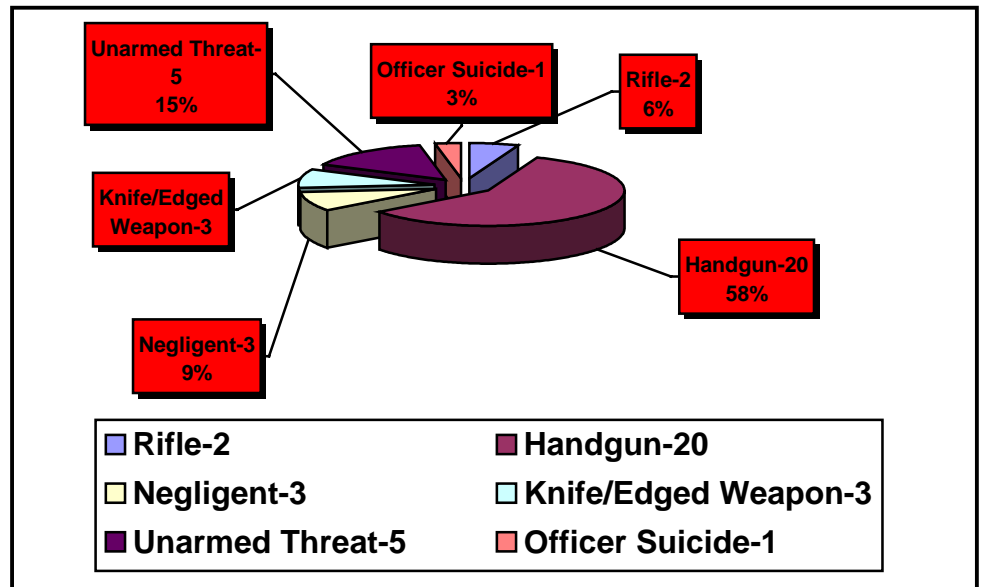


In 1999, there were 34 firearm discharges at persons by Metropolitan Police Department officers. Of those 34 cases, 31 (or 91%) of the discharges were within departmental policy. (note: the 2 pending dispositions are preliminarily in policy). The 3 cases that were found to be not within departmental policy are described later in this report.

NOTE: All justification figures are subject to final review and determination by the Service Weapon Review Board and the Chief of Police.



In 1999, Metropolitan Police Department officers faced numerous threats during use-of-firearm incidents. 62% of the officers involved in discharges were faced with a firearm threat.



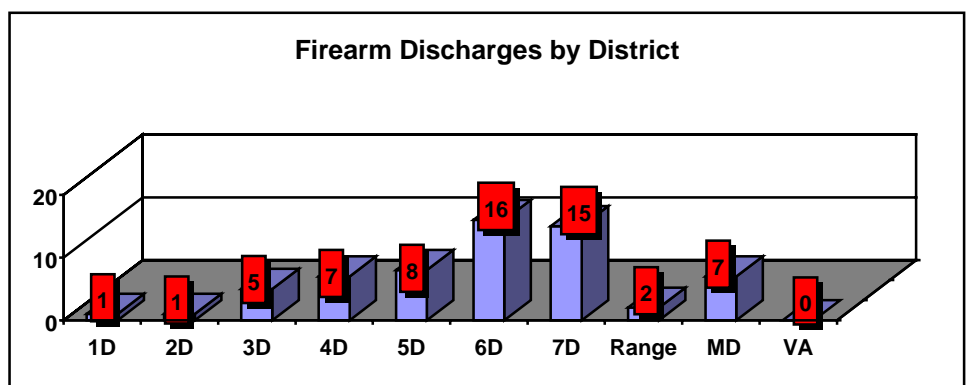
In 1999, Metropolitan Police officers shot 21 animals. Of the 21 animal shootings, 16 involved Pit Bull breed dogs. In 1998, officers shot 11 animals. This represents an increase of 10 discharges from last year.

| Police Jurisdiction | Shootings |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| First District (1D) | 0 |
| Second District (2D) | 0 |
| Third District (3D) | 2 |
| Fourth District (4D) | 2 |
| Fifth District (5D) | 4 |
| Sixth District (6D) | 5 |
| Seventh District (7D) | 6 |
| Maryland (MD) | 2 |
| Virginia (VA) | 0 |

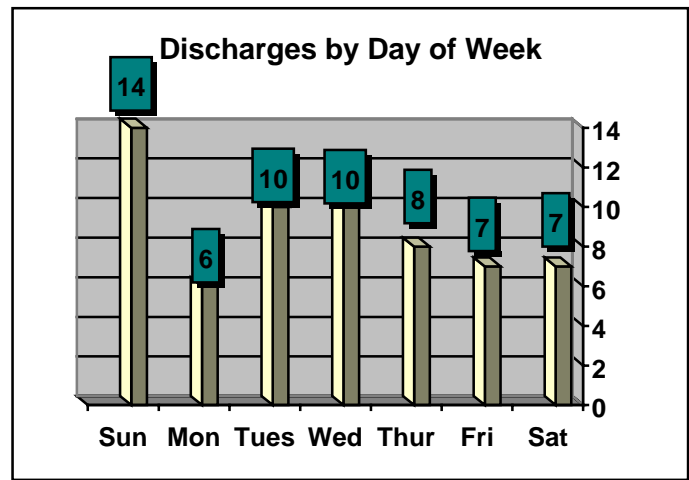
| Breed of Dog | Number of Shootings |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Pit Bull | 16 |
| Akita | 1 |
| Rotweiler | 1 |
| German Shepherd | 1 |
| Unknown Breed | 2 |



Metropolitan Police Department officer firearm discharges were most prevalent in the Regional Operations Command – East. The Sixth and Seventh Police Districts combined for a total of 31 discharges. These discharges reflect the statistical crime trends in those areas.

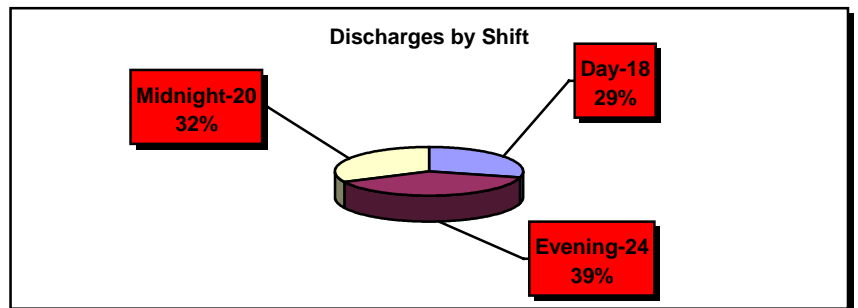


Police-involved firearm discharges were generally evenly distributed by day of week. The majority of discharges occurred on Sunday with 14 discharges. Tuesday and Wednesday experienced 10 discharges respectively.



Police-involved firearms discharges were also generally evenly distributed by shift. The majority of discharges occurred during the 3rd Watch (evening shift).

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| Day | 7:00AM – 3:00 PM |
| Evening | 3:00 PM – 11:00 PM |
| Midnight | 11:00PM – 7:00 AM |



In 1999, there were only 4 police firearm discharges involving automobiles, compared with 8 in 1998. Of these 4 discharges, 3 involved officers shooting at *a threat inside a vehicle*, not the vehicle itself. Only 1 discharge involved an officer firing shots at a fleeing vehicle, and this discharge was ruled unjustified.



The Force Investigation Team also tracked the median age of discharging officers and the average years of service of discharging officers. It was revealed that the median age of Metropolitan Police officers involved in firearm discharges was 34 years old. It was also learned that the average years of service of Metropolitan Police officers involved in firearm discharges was 9 years of service.



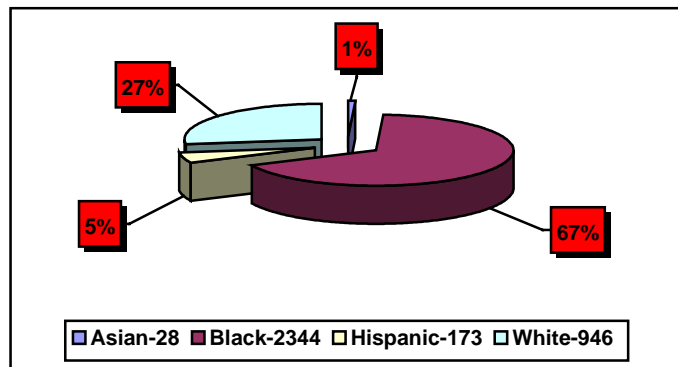
The Force Investigation Team also tracked the race and gender of officers and suspects involved in police-shooting incidents. The greatest number of police-involved shootings involved African American Officers and African American suspects.

Race & Gender of Discharging Officers and the Race & Gender of the Suspects that they fired at:*

| | |
|---|-----------|
| BLACK MALE OFFICER / BLACK MALE SUSPECT | 28 |
| BLACK MALE OFFICER / WHITE MALE SUSPECT | 1 |
| BLACK MALE OFFICER / HISPANIC MALE SUSPECT | 1 |
| BLACK FEMALE OFFICER / BLACK MALE SUSPECT | 3 |
| WHITE MALE OFFICER / BLACK MALE SUSPECT | 9 |

***Only includes data regarding officers who discharged a firearm at a suspect. This includes incidents where more than one officer fired upon the same suspect, or one officer fired upon more than one suspect.**

For reference purposes, this chart reflects the racial composition of sworn members of the Metropolitan Police Department. (These statistics were provided by the Human Services Division and were current as of December 31, 1999).



The statistical information highlighted in this 1999 Annual Report reflects only a portion of the data that the Force Investigation Team has tracked. The presentation of these statistics has offered Metropolitan Police Department managers additional data to analyze which helps them identify improvement opportunities for training, equipment, and procedures.

Case Highlights

FATAL SHOOTING INCIDENTS

OPR/FIT Case #99-01

This incident involved a possibly mentally unstable male armed with a knife. The suspect lunged at uniformed officers who had responded to a report of a disturbance. It was at this time that two officers fired several rounds at the suspect. The suspect was killed. The final disposition of this case is pending.

OPR/FIT Case #99-019

This incident involved an off-duty officer getting gas at a gas station. While paying, a male suspect produced a handgun and attempted to rob the officer. The officer drew his service weapon and shot the suspect. The suspect was killed. The suspect had been armed with a pellet gun. The initial determination of this case determined it to be justified.

OPR/FIT Case #99-048

Plainclothes on-duty officers observed a rape in progress. The officers intervened and stopped the rape, but the suspect fled on foot. The officers chased the suspect, and an off-duty officer driving by also got involved in the pursuit. The suspect was cornered near some railroad tracks and motioned as if he was reaching for a weapon. Two of the officers fired, striking the suspect. The suspect was killed. The victim had been kidnapped from a nearby Metro station. The final disposition of this case is pending.

OPR/FIT Case #99-057

A uniformed officer was confronted by a male suspect armed with a broken bottle. The suspect had been stabbing himself with the bottle. As the officer approached the suspect, the suspect advanced towards him, whereupon the officer fired. The suspect was killed. The final disposition of this case is pending.

DEATH-IN-CUSTODY AFTER ALTERCATION**OPR/FIT Case #LL-99-01**

On December 12, 1999, the Force Investigation Team's responsibilities were expanded to handle in-custody deaths following an altercation with police. In this incident, officers had responded to a burglary in progress in which a male was trying to break down an apartment door. Uniformed officers arrived, and confronted a male suspect armed with heavy-duty bicycle lock. Officers initially drew their firearms, but holstered and utilized their ASP collapsible batons. After a physical confrontation, the suspect was handcuffed and arrested. Shortly thereafter, the suspect died. An autopsy revealed that the suspect had ingested narcotics, and died of acute delirium and cocaine intoxication. The death was ruled accidental by the Office of the Medical Examiner.

OTHER INVESTIGATIONS**OPR/FIT Case #99A1**

Members from several law enforcement agencies were participating in Special Weapons (SWAT) training at the MPD Special Operations Division firearm range in Lorton, Virginia. Officers were using MP-5 submachine guns. During the training, several rounds exited the firearms range and landed in a nearby residential community. The Force Investigation Team conducted the investigation. The Chief of Police subsequently closed the firearms range permanently.

OPR/FIT Case #99A4

A citizen participating in a police ride-along alleged that he observed an officer shoot a male suspect. The citizen alleged that after shooting the suspect, the officer did not report it and did not offer medical assistance. Members of the Force Investigation Team investigated the allegation, and discovered that it was false. The citizen was arrested and charged with making a false report to police. The citizen subsequently admitted to fabricating the allegation, and plead guilty in D.C. Superior Court.

OUT- OF- POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

OPR/FIT Case #99-02

This incident involved an off-duty police officer who confronted a suspected burglar. While trying to arrest the suspect, the officer became involved in a physical altercation in which his service pistol discharged. No rounds took effect, but the suspect fled the scene. As the suspect fled on foot, the officer discharged his service weapon in an attempt to apprehend a fleeing felon. No rounds took effect, and the suspect made good his escape. The suspect did not appear to pose an immediate threat, and it was determined that the firearm discharge at the fleeing suspect did not fall within the department's guidelines. The officer received disciplinary action.

OPR/FIT Case #99-025

This incident involved an on duty police officer operating her private auto. The officer parked her car in front of a dry cleaning store, and while inside the store a suspect attempted to steal her auto. The officer, upon seeing her auto being driven away, tried to stop the suspect driver. The driver continued on, whereupon the officer fired several times at the auto. The auto or suspect did not pose an apparent threat, and it was determined that this discharge did not fall within the department's guidelines. The involved officer is pending disciplinary action.

OPR/FIT Case #99-027

This incident involved an off-duty police officer who became involved in a domestic dispute with his girlfriend. During the dispute, the officer fired his service pistol at the victim, causing minor injuries. It was determined that this discharge was not within departmental policy, and the officer was arrested and charged with assault. The officer subsequently plead guilty in D.C. Superior Court and resigned from the department.

Training and Professional Development

The Force Investigation Team is committed to education and training. This commitment is reflected in the Team's vision statement, which challenges the unit to "*Constantly strive to improve our ability to conduct investigations through professional development. Aspire to become a 'learning organization'*"

Accordingly, in 1999 the members of the Force Investigation Team participated in 1,776 hours of training. These hours comprised of both traditional and contemporary training sessions. In addition to training on deadly force and homicide investigations, members of the Force Investigation Team participated in a plethora of training seminars and events. Highlights of some of the training are listed below:

- **Police Critical Incident Debriefing**, which explored the psychological and physiological considerations surrounding police trauma, held at Dominion Hospital.
- **Civil Rights Investigation** training from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- **FBI National Academy Use-of-Force Roundtable**. Members of the Force Investigation Team met with 13 police executives from around the world who investigate police use-of-force. This provided opportunity to learn about force incidents from a national and international perspective.
- **Problem Solving and Strategic Planning through Civil War Battlefield Staff Rides**. Members of the Force Investigation Team participated in this innovative program at the Gettysburg and Antietam Civil War battlefields.

Another strategy that the Force Investigation Team uses to constantly improve is the employment of the concept of *benchmarking*. Benchmarking involves meeting with other agencies and organizations to learn ways how to become more efficient. In doing so, the Force Investigation Team has examined use-of-force policies from 30 law enforcement agencies. In addition, members of the Force Investigation Team have visited 16 other law enforcement agencies around the nation to gain hands-on knowledge of how other police departments conduct use-of-force investigations.



The Force Investigation Team has also benchmarked with private industry. For example, the Force Investigation Team visited the General Motors assembly plant in Baltimore to observe the importance of a system (pictured). The team also met with General Motors executives to discuss investigative techniques used in private industry. Also, the Team has sailed with the United States Coast Guard to learn their use-of-force policies and to observe the importance of teamwork and Commitment.

Honors and Awards

The Metropolitan Police Department Force Investigation Team has contributed to the agency's improved handling of use-of-force incidents. To date, 7 local and federal law enforcement agencies have sought technical assistance from the Force Investigation Team on how to create or improve their own agencies' force-related investigations.

In 1999, the Force Investigation Team was nominated for the following prestigious awards:

- *The 2000 Rochester Institute of Technology / USA Today Quality Cup Improvement award.*
- *The 2000 Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government Innovations in American Government award.*

Finalists and winners for these awards will be announced in mid – 2000.

The Year 2000 and Beyond

In 2000, the Force Investigation Team will continue to investigate use-of-firearm incidents involving Metropolitan Police officers. There is a possibility that the Team will expand to handle enumerated non-deadly force incidents.

The Force Investigation Team will continue its professional development through training and additional benchmarking visits. The Force Investigation Team has requested that the FBI Behavioral Science Unit provide “Understanding the Suicide by Cop phenomenon.” In addition, it is anticipated that the team will visit a Beretta firearms factory in early 2000.

A goal for the Force Investigation Team in the year 2000 will be to establish dialogue with critics and advocacy groups. For example, team members have already interacted with members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and anticipate interaction with other minority focused advocacy organizations.